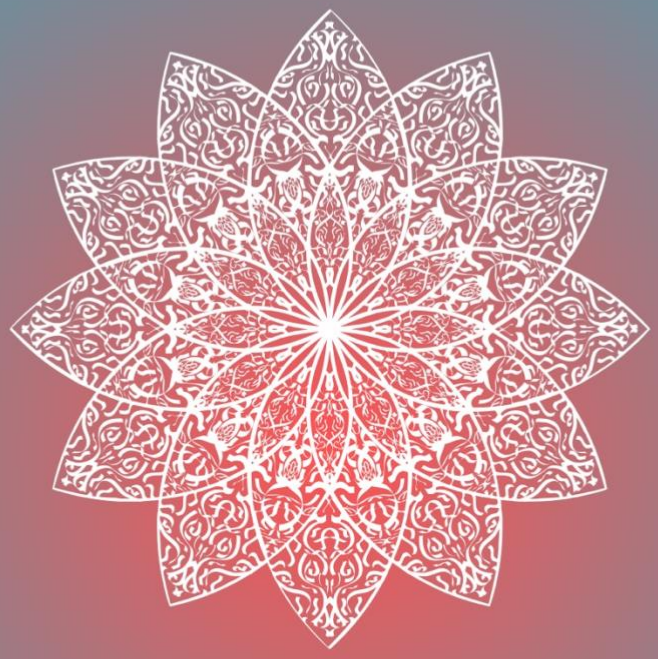
UMMUL MOMINEEN



MARIYA

AL QIBTIYA BINT SHAM'UN

ماريۃ القِبطیۃ بِنت شمعون رضئ اللہ تعالی عنہا

SHAIKH MIR ASEDULLAH QUADRI

UMMUL MOMINEEN MARIYA AL-QIBTIYA BINT SHAM'UN

(رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)

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بِسم الله الرحمنِ الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام
على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

UMMUL MOMINEEN MARIYA AL-QIBTIYYA (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا)

BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE

Ummul Momineen Mariya Al-Qibtiyya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was born in Upper Egypt in a Coptic Christian household towards the end of 6th Century CE. Her lineage, as preserved by historians like al-Waqidi and Ibn Sa'd, identifies her as Coptic, descending from the ancient Christian communities of Egypt that had long lived under Byzantine rule and local Arab governance.

Egypt at the time was under the administration of the Byzantine-affiliated governor al-Muqawqis (believed to be Juraij ibn Mina), who governed the region on behalf of the Christian Roman Emperor in Constantinople. Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was either born into a family associated with the noble retainers of the court or was part of a respected class of educated bondwomen, as was common in the Byzantine world where beauty, education, and cultural training were valued attributes in palace society.

From the historical accounts that survive, Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was known for her striking beauty—described by early historians as fair-skinned and dignified—a feature that distinguished her from Arab women of the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) household. Her early upbringing would have included the tenets of Coptic Christianity, with likely exposure to liturgical learning and possibly the Greek or Coptic languages.

Though raised as a Christian, her early life was not one of prominence or political influence. She lived in an empire caught between fading Byzantine grandeur and the rising momentum of Islam in Arabia. Her life's course would change forever when a letter from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) in Madinah arrived at the governor's palace in Egypt.

In the seventh year after Hijrah (628 CE), Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) sent letters to various regional rulers, including Heraclius of Byzantium, Khosrow of Persia, and al-Muqawqis of Egypt, inviting them to Islam. Al-Muqawqis did not accept the call, but he responded with respect and diplomacy. Among the gifts he sent to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) were two Coptic women—Mariya and her sister Sirin—along with a mule named Duldul, a donkey named Yafur, garments, and an Ethiopian eunuch servant named Mabur.

It was through this journey, from the palace of al-Muqawqis to the city of Madinah, that Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) was chosen by divine decree to leave behind her homeland, her religion, and her former identity. She was not merely a gift, but a woman on the threshold of transforming her destiny—from a Coptic servant to a believer, and from a foreigner in Arabia to the mother of the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) son Ibrahim (عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ).

Her arrival in Madinah would soon become the beginning of a deeply intimate and historic chapter—not only for Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), but for the entire Muslim Ummah.

LIFE BEFORE THE MARRIAGE TO THE PROPHET (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

Before her name would be spoken with reverence in the lands of Arabia, Mariya bint Shamun (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) lived a life of obscurity and confinement within the courtly world of Egypt. Though not a princess or a noblewoman by status, she was nevertheless attached to the royal household of al-Muqawqis, the Byzantine-appointed governor of Egypt. It is within this court, shaped by the cultural legacy of Christian Byzantium and the ancient traditions of Egypt, that Mariya's life unfolded.

She was known for her beauty and intelligence—features that brought her into proximity with the governor's circle. Yet, despite her external refinement, her life was one of limited autonomy, as was the norm for women attached to ruling houses in that era. She likely lived a life of religious ritual, protocol, and isolation, raised in the tenets of Coptic Christianity, possibly under monastic or clerical supervision, and instructed in the basic teachings of her faith. But her destiny lay far beyond the walls of al-Muqawqis's palace.

In 7 AH (628 CE), a turning point came. Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), now firmly established in Madinah and seeking peaceful relations with regional powers, dispatched letters of invitation to Islam to several rulers across the known world. One such letter reached al-Muqawqis,

delivered by Ḥaṭib ibn Abi Balta'a (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), a Companion fluent in diplomacy and languages.

Though al-Muqawqis declined to accept Islam, he did not dismiss the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) outright. In fact, he responded with a gesture of honor and courtesy—sending a delegation bearing gifts, among whom were Mariya and her sister Sirin, both described as intelligent, graceful, and of pure Coptic lineage.

The historical sources, including Ibn Sa'd and al-Ṭabari, suggest that Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنها) and her sister were not delivered as ordinary slaves, but rather as prestigious attendants, offered as tokens of good will and perhaps to serve in the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) household or be placed under the care of his Companions. Accompanying them were fine robes, perfumes, and animals—a customary gift suite from rulers acknowledging a peer's message, even if not accepting its content.

Upon arrival in Madinah, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) exercised his discretion regarding their place in society. He offered Sirin in marriage to Ḥassan ibn Thabit (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), who accepted her and fathered a son with her. As for Mariya, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) chose to retain her as a companion for himself, and she soon embraced Islam with sincerity and clarity of heart.

Her conversion was not coerced, but rather an act of awakening. Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنها) had come from a background of religious doctrine and devotion, and the message of pure monotheism, combined with the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) kindness and dignity, resonated deeply with her. It is reported in Ibn Hajar's al-Isabah that she accepted Islam willingly and was thereafter treated with honor and privacy. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) allotted her a separate residence near Masjid Quba, where she could live away from the center of activity and focus on worship.

Thus ended her life as a foreign captive and began her role as a believing woman under the care of the final Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). No longer Mariya the bondwoman of al-Muqawqis, she was now Mariya the Believer, soon to be the mother of the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) son, and his community (mother of believers) and a woman whose silence, humility, and sincerity would become her enduring legacy.

LIFE WITH THE PROPHET (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

After her acceptance of Islam and relocation to Madinah, Mariya al-Qibṭiyya (رضئ الله تعالى عنها) entered into a deeply dignified and spiritually profound phase of her life under the direct care of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). Unlike his other wives, she was rightfully possessed by the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), legally sanctioned by Quranic command. Thus, her position was

elevated in a way that would transform not only her own life but also secure for her a place of lasting honor in the prophetic household.

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) assigned her residence at a location known as al-Aliyah, near Masjid Quba, on the southern edge of Madinah. This residence, somewhat secluded from the center of activity, offered Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) tranquility and space for spiritual reflection. It was in this simple yet blessed home that she embraced her new faith with conviction and grew close to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) through her piety, modesty, and sincerity.

One of the most significant events of her life—and indeed, one of the most emotionally moving moments in the Seerah—was her pregnancy and the birth of the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) son, Ibrahim (عليه السلام). After many years of marriage during which the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) sons had died in infancy, and with none of his wives bearing him a surviving male child, the news of Mariya's pregnancy brought deep joy to the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). The event also reaffirmed for many the dignity of Mariya's position in his life, as motherhood in Arab culture was closely linked to status and honor.

When Ibrahim was born, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) took great delight in him. He named the child after his forefather, the Prophet Ibrahim (عليه السلام), and said: *"A son has been born to me tonight, and I have named him after my father Ibrahim."* (Sahih Muslim)

The child was nurtured with great care. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) frequently visited Mariya's residence to see Ibrahim (عليه السلام), carrying him, kissing him, and showing public affection rarely seen in Arab society at the time. His joy was so evident that the Companions remarked how his eyes would brighten upon seeing his son. Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), through this gift, became not merely a consort of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), but a mother of his only son born in Madinah.

However, the joy was destined to be brief. In 10 AH, when Ibrahim was around 16 to 18 months old, he fell ill and passed away. Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) was overcome with grief, and the scene of his sorrow remains etched in the memory of the Ummah. He wept as he held his dying son in his arms, saying: *"The eyes weep and the heart is grieved, but we say only what pleases our Lord. Indeed, O Ibrāhīm, we are grieved by your departure."* (Sahih al-Bukhari)

This trial was as much Mariya's (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) as it was the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). For her, the loss of her only child, and the son of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), was a sorrow that she bore with quiet patience. The pain of losing Ibrahim did not diminish her status in the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) eyes. On the contrary, it cemented her place in his heart and legacy. As a mother of Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) son, she was a free woman with all social and religious protection of believers.

While Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) never participated in political matters or public teaching, she remained a figure of reverence. Her household continued to be part of the Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) domestic life, and though she lived away from the central quarters of his other wives, she was frequently visited and honored. Despite initial tensions with some of the other wives due to her unique position, over time these matters softened, and she lived in dignity and peace.

She did not narrate many hadiths, nor did she become a public personality. Yet, her contribution to the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), and to the Seerah itself, is profound. She embodied the universalism of Islam—how a Christian woman from Egypt could become not only a Muslim, but the mother of a Prophet's son and the mother of believers. Her story reflects Islam's transcendence over race, geography, and former belief, and her character stands as a quiet pillar of faith, motherhood, and humility.

LIFE AFTER THE PROPHET (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

The passing of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) in the eleventh year after Hijrah cast a long and solemn shadow over the hearts of the believers. For Mariya al-Qibṭiyya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا), the grief was layered and profound. She had not only lost her spiritual guide and protector but also the person who had restored her honor, dignified her faith, and shared with her the joy and sorrow of parenthood. Having already buried her only child, Ibrahim (عليه السلام), Mariya was now left to live the remainder of her life in quiet remembrance and unwavering devotion.

Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) led a life of seclusion and spiritual retreat. Her home remained near Masjid Quba, and though she was not often seen in public.

The Rightly Guided Caliphs honored her with care. Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddiq (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), and later Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), ensured that Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) received her regular stipend from the Bayt al-Mal (public treasury), as was the right of the Mothers of the Believers. But more than material support, they afforded her respect and honor recognizing her unique role in the life of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) and her grief-marked endurance.

It is said that she spent much of her time in worship and solitude, retreating from the world that had once carried her from the palaces of Egypt to the deserts of Arabia. Her sorrow was silent, and her remembrance of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) was steady and sincere. Her legacy was spiritual.

In the 16th year after Hijrah (637 CE), during the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (رضئ الله تعالى عنه), Mariya (رضئ الله تعالى عنہا) passed away. Her death marked the end of a deeply symbolic life—one that had crossed continents, faiths, and destinies. Umar (رضئ الله تعالى عنه) himself led her funeral prayer, a testimony to the esteem in which she was held. She was laid to rest in the blessed cemetery of Jannat al-Baqi, among the family and Companions of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).